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# The *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*: A ‘Byzantine’ history?

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### A B S T R A C T

In the last 150 years of scholarship, opinions have always differed as to just who William of Apulia was, and for which audience his epic poem the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* (completed c. 1099) was written. Many have felt that the work is not only pro-Norman, but vehemently anti-Byzantine. This article reconsiders the arguments about William's poem. Firstly, William seems to have particularly identified with those who exhibited a marked respect for, and association with, the eastern empire. Secondly, it will be suggested that not only did William know Greek — not an uncommon phenomenon in southern Italy — but that he may well have drawn on sources written in that language, perhaps even the same material used by his near contemporaries Michael Attaleiates and John Skylitzes. Thirdly, despite the fact that observers normally emphasise William's preference for the image of *muliebres* Byzantines, it is argued that the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* actually underscores their *virtus*.

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In the introduction to his 1851 edition of the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* [GRW], an epic poem of five books completed c. 1099, Roger Wilmans opined that the author, William of Apulia, was not of Norman extraction since the work criticised the *avaritia* of the *gens Normannorum*.<sup>1</sup> William's Lombard origin, felt Wilmans, was evidenced by the conspicuous number of references to Giovinazzo, and hence the poet may well have hailed from this Apulian town. While Ferdinand Chalandon accepted this viewpoint in 1907,<sup>2</sup> it would be challenged by Marguerite Mathieu in her 1961 edition of the GRW. She conceded that it was not out of the bounds of possibility that the half-Lombard Roger Borsa — the son

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<sup>1</sup> *Guillermi Apuliensis, Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, ed. R. Wilmans (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores 9 [hereafter MGH SS], Hannover, 1851), 239.

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile*, 2 vols (Paris, 1907), vol. 1, xxxix.

of Duke Robert Guiscard (d. 1085) — could have recruited a Lombard to sing the exploits of his father, but was nonetheless convinced that William, like Borsa's half-brother Marc Bohemond, was a Norman born in Apulia.<sup>3</sup> Almost a decade later, while Laetitia Boehm was less certain about William's ethnicity, emphasis was placed on a non-Italian origin ('Normanne oder Franzone?').<sup>4</sup> More recently, Kenneth Baxter Wolf suggested that William was a Lombard attached to Duke Roger's court.<sup>5</sup> Huguette Taviani-Carozzi has also stressed William's attachment to the Salernitan court, although she designated the poet as being Norman rather than Lombard.<sup>6</sup> Indubitably, the poet's name indicates a French-speaking origin, yet it has been observed that Lombards were known to give their sons and daughters Norman names, the most popular being William and Matilda.<sup>7</sup> Inter-marriage was a common practice among the Normans and Lombards in late eleventh-century southern Italy, and it is interesting to note that both ethnic groups also married Greek speakers.<sup>8</sup> It will never be possible to determine William's extraction with any certainty, but given that the ensuing discussion will illustrate his Lombardo-Byzantine sympathies, it cannot be ruled out that he was the son of Greek-speaking, Lombard parents, or perhaps the result of a union between two of the three prominent ethnicities in Apulia.

Much to the chagrin of Geoffrey Malaterra, Duke Roger Borsa seems to have treated the Lombards no differently than the Normans.<sup>9</sup> Finishing his *gesta* probably less than a year or two after the GRW — that is, c. 1100–1 — the monk consistently extolled the *strenuitas* ('vigour', 'resoluteness') of his people, a treatment that necessitated a negative portrayal of those whose principalities the Normans had since absorbed. About 20 years earlier, the Cassinese Lombard Amatus wrote that God's chosen had triumphed over his people; the Lombard princes, Gisulf II of Salerno and Pandulf IV of Capua, had forfeited their right to rule on account of their manifold sins.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, William of Apulia tended to write about the Lombards in a positive fashion, including a treatment of Gisulf II that runs counter to the negative portraits by Amatus and Malaterra. Of course, since William claimed to have written at the request of the half-Lombard son of Robert Guiscard and Sichelgaita of Salerno, it would be expected that the poet needed to write respectfully of the duchess' people. Yet William exceeded expectations in this regard. Indeed, he may well have betrayed the feelings of a cultured Lombard aristocrat when commenting on the marriage between Guiscard and Sichelgaita: Gisulf was initially hesitant at the prospect of a union between his sister and the Norman, 'because the Gauls were seen to be a savage, barbarous, cruel and boorishly minded people'.<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere William wrote that Gisulf had been 'robbed of the honour of Salerno' by Robert Guiscard.<sup>12</sup> This is a rather startling comment, for it obviously questions the legitimacy of Norman rule at Salerno. Such a view was held by Robert's enemies, not his admirers. Seizing Gisulf's principality in 1077 had raised the ire of contemporaries, and the act would continue to be

<sup>3</sup> Guillaume de Pouille, *La Geste de Robert Guiscard*, ed. and trans., M. Mathieu (Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neo-ellenici, Testi e monumenti, 4, Palermo, 1961) [hereafter GRW], 17–23 (17).

<sup>4</sup> Laetitia Boehm, 'Nomen gentis Normannorum: Der Aufstieg der Normannen in Spiegel der Normannischen Historiographie', *I Normanni la loro espansione in Europa nell'alto medioevo* (Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto-medioevo, 16, Spoleto, 1969), 623–704 (694).

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Making history: the Normans and their historians in eleventh-century Italy* (Philadelphia, 1995), 126–7.

<sup>6</sup> Huguette Taviani-Carozzi, *La Terre du monde: Robert Guiscard et la conquête normande en Italie. Mythe et histoire* (Paris, 1996), 20–2.

<sup>7</sup> Patricia Skinner, 'And her name was ...? Gender and naming in medieval southern Italy', *Medieval Prosopography*, 20 (1999), 23–49 (37–8); Joanna Drell, 'Cultural syncretism and ethnic identity: the Norman "conquest" of southern Italy and Sicily', *Journal of Medieval History*, 25 (1999), 203–13 (196); Joanna Drell, *Kinship and conquest: family strategies in the principality of Salerno during the Norman period, 1077–1194* (Ithaca-London, 2002), 138–9.

<sup>8</sup> Graham Loud, *The age of Robert Guiscard: southern Italy and the Norman conquest* (Harlow, 2000), 286; Drell, *Kinship and conquest*, 138–9; Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily* (London, 2003), 55.

<sup>9</sup> Gaufredus Malaterrae, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*, ed. E. Pontieri (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, Raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento, 5:1, Bologna, 1928) [hereafter DRGR], IV.24, 102.

<sup>10</sup> As noted by Graham Loud, the motif of the sinfulness of the Lombards had been used in the previous century by another Cassinese writer, Erchempert. See 'The *Gens Normannorum* — myth or reality?', *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies* [hereafter ANS], 4 (1981), 104–16 (112); 'Introduction', in: *The History of the Normans by Amatus of Montecassino*, ed. G.A. Loud and trans. P.N. Dunbar (Woodbridge, 2004), 31.

<sup>11</sup> GRW, II.426–8, 154: 'quia Galli / Esse videbantur gens effera, barbara, dira, / Mentis inhumane.'

<sup>12</sup> GRW, III.462, 188: 'spoliatus honore Salerni'.

censured by important individuals. Epistles of Gregory VII (1082) and Urban II (1088) continued to refer to Gisulf as *princeps Salernitanus*,<sup>13</sup> and the former underscored that Robert held Salerno unjustly when reconciling with the thrice-excommunicated duke at Ceprano in 1080.<sup>14</sup>

We can assume that like most sons, Roger Borsa loved his mother. Accordingly, it would be expected that William, if he was in fact composing for a Salernitan audience, would write favourably of Sichelgaita. Yet this is not entirely the case. The image of the Amazonian warrior at the Battle of Dyrrachion in October 1081 is a pervasive one, a stylisation found in the famous twelfth-century *Alexias* by the Byzantine princess Anna Komnene. The bellicose duchess exhorts the fleeing Italo-Norman troops with: 'To what point will you flee? Stand fast, be men.'<sup>15</sup> Half a century earlier, William recorded a much less heroic version: the duchess was actually among the fleeing; she had in fact attempted to gain passage on an enemy ship. But providence saved her from the eternal ignominy of flight: 'Not wishing her to become a laughing stock', Roger's noble mother is 'snatched away' by *Deus*.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, this episode is problematic if we are to accept without reservation that the GRW was intended exclusively for Roger's court at Salerno. Moreover, the duke's patronage is only alluded to in the closing lines of the poem; the GRW actually opens with a reference to the 'solicitation of the awe-inspiring father Urban' — that is, Pope Urban II.<sup>17</sup>

As Urban II, like Gregory VII before him, was on intimate terms with 'our dearest son, the prince of Salerno and duke of Amalfi', William's treatment of Gisulf could well be suggestive of a papal audience for the GRW. A decade before the poem was finished, tension had existed between Norman Salerno and the papacy. In 1086 Roger and Sichelgaita forwarded their own candidate for the archbishopric of Salerno, a proposal vigorously opposed by Gisulf. Although Roger and Sichelgaita were eventually able to secure Alfanus' candidature in the following year, Gisulf's influence at the papal curia is evidenced by the fact that the bishops and cardinals initially vetoed the nomination at his request.<sup>18</sup> Gisulf was dead by 1090 and relations had considerably improved between Salerno and the papacy by the time William had finished the poem (c. 1099). Yet William's stylisation of a 'noble'<sup>19</sup> prince 'robbed' of his principality surely recalls the period when the possession of Salerno was an issue of contention between the Normans on the one hand, and Gisulf and the papacy on the other. Not only would a Norman audience have found the *spoliatus* contention offensive, but presumably so too would have Roger. After all, if he had commissioned a work designed to extol the deeds of his father, a far more negative appraisal of Gisulf would have been expected and, indeed, required in order to justify Guiscard's actions. This was the approach taken by Amatus and Malaterra: the former wrote disparagingly of 'the master of every vice',<sup>20</sup> and the latter noted that the contumacious prince had never bothered to conceal his hatred towards 'our people'.<sup>21</sup> To Amatus, Gisulf was particularly tainted by the sin of *superbia*; it was therefore to the credit of Robert Guiscard that

<sup>13</sup> *Das Register Gregors VII*, ed. E. Caspar (MGH, Epistolae Selectae, 2:1–2:2, Berlin, 1920), vol. 2:2, IX.27, 610: 'carissimus noster Salernitanus princeps'; Urban II, cited in: Herbert Cowdrey, *The age of Abbot Desiderius: Montecassino, the papacy, and the Normans in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries* (Oxford, 1983), 205, n. 85: 'karissimus filius noster Salernitanus princeps et Amalphitanus dux'.

<sup>14</sup> *Das Register Gregors VII*, ed. Caspar, vol. 2:2, VIII.1a, 515.

<sup>15</sup> *Anna Comnenae Alexias*, ed. D.R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 40 [hereafter CFHB], Berlin, 2001) [hereafter *Alexias*], V.vi, 133: μέχρι πόσου φεύεσθε; στήτε, ἄνδρες ἔστε. On Sichelgaita, see Skinner, "'Halt! Be men!': Sichelgaita of Salerno, gender and the Norman conquest of southern Italy", *Gender and History*, 12 (2000), 622–41; Valerie Eads, 'Sichelgaita of Salerno: Amazon or trophy wife?', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 3 (2005), 72–87.

<sup>16</sup> GRW, IV.430–1, 226: 'Hanc Deus eripuit, fieri ludibria nolens / Matronae tantae tam nobilis et venerandae.' The 'snatched away' (*eripuit*) imagery may possibly recall the *Iliad*, for Paris is similarly 'snatched away' (ἐξήρατ) from Menelaus by Aphrodite: Homer, *Iliad*, Books I–XII, ed. D.B. Monro (Oxford, 1884), 3.380; see below, n. 75.

<sup>17</sup> GRW, Prologus, xi, 98: 'patris Urbani reverenda petitio'.

<sup>18</sup> *Hugonis Flaviniacensis Chronicon*, ed. G.H. Pertz (MGH SS 8, Hannover, 1848) II, 467–8; *Chronica monasterii Casinensis*, ed. H. Hoffmann (MGH SS 34, Hannover, 1984) [hereafter CMC], III.67, 449.

<sup>19</sup> GRW, II.418, 154: 'generoso ... Gisulfo'.

<sup>20</sup> Amato di Montecassino, *Storia de' Normanni*, ed. V. Bartholomeis (Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Roma, 1935) [hereafter *Amatus*], IV.43, 214: 'maistre de tout malice'. The various sins of Gisulf were recounted in great detail by the monk over nine chapters (IV.34–43, 206–16, IV.47–9, 219–20).

<sup>21</sup> DRGR, III.2, 58: 'nostrae genti sese inimicari non abscondebat.'

he, to use the words of Malaterra, 'perceived the wicked mind of the prince'.<sup>22</sup> In essence, both chroniclers emphasised that Gisulf had relinquished the claim to his ancestral patrimony on account of his impiety, plotting and treachery.

Wolf, among others, has argued that the GRW was no doubt commissioned by Roger Borsa for a specific purpose: to solidify his claim to Apulia 'in the face of the ever-present challenge posed by his half-brother' Bohemond.<sup>23</sup> While the poem certainly does record Guiscard's nomination of Borsa as heir to the ducal title, it could not be called an overarching or recurring theme.<sup>24</sup> To distance the claims of Bohemond, William would have needed to denigrate him. Instead, the poet wrote of a 'vigorous offspring' and 'knight of great intelligence', a portrayal no doubt representative of the relative accord between the brothers at the time of writing.<sup>25</sup> In order to quell Bohemond's aggression, Roger had ceded some Apulian and Calabrian towns to him in 1088–9.<sup>26</sup> Henceforth the half-brothers were at peace, although rumours of Roger's death to a serious illness in 1093 saw Bohemond resuming hostilities.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, reconciliation with the now-recovered Borsa at Melfi occurred soon afterwards, and Bohemond, along with Count Roger of Sicily, helped the duke to suppress the revolt of his brother-in-law William de Grandmesnil in 1094.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, although Roger's political legitimacy vis-à-vis the duchy of Apulia would surely have been of the utmost importance to William had he been writing shortly after Guiscard's death in 1085, the fact that Borsa's status was formally acknowledged by Urban II at the Council of Melfi in 1089 would suggest that such a literary imperative was of little concern some ten years later.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, the 'Bohemond problem' had already been solved by the time that William had completed his poem (c. 1099).<sup>30</sup> Encountering a group of crusaders when assisting his half-brother and uncle, then besieging Amalfi in 1096, Bohemond decided to join them; he would not be seen again in Italy until 1105.<sup>31</sup>

It is not out of the bounds of possibility that Urban did indeed request the GRW to be written. William, if he was a cleric attached to the Salernitan court, could have met the pope during the Council of Melfi in 1089, 'at which Duke Roger was in attendance, in addition to all the counts of Apulia and Calabria and of the other provinces'.<sup>32</sup> Nine years later (1098), there were three other opportunities: firstly, during the siege of Capua, at which both the duke and his uncle, Count Roger of Sicily, were present; secondly, when Urban visited the duke and the count at Salerno; and thirdly at the Council of Bari in October, also attended by Roger Borsa.<sup>33</sup> No less than 185 bishops were said to have been present at the council; there were also Italo-Greek prelates in attendance, as well as envoys from Constantinople. It will be argued below that William knew Greek, and if this is correct, a man of this ability would have been of great use to both the duke and pope in such situations.<sup>34</sup> Anna Komnene related that she drew some of her south Italian information from an unnamed Λατίνος (*Latinos*) who

<sup>22</sup> DRGR, III.2, 58: 'conceptam animo principis malitiam'.

<sup>23</sup> Mathieu, in: GRW, 13; Wolf, *Making history*, 124; Ewan Johnson, 'Normandy and Norman identity in southern Italian chronicles', *ANS*, 27 (2005), 85–100 (87).

<sup>24</sup> GRW, IV.186–99, 214.

<sup>25</sup> GRW, II.422, 154: 'Buamondus strenua proles' (see also V.227, 248: 'clarae sobolis'); IV.208, 214: 'magnae mentis eques Boamundus'.

<sup>26</sup> *Lupus protospatarius*, ed. G.H. Pertz (MGH SS 5, Hannover, 1844) [hereafter *Lupus*], ad an. 1088, 62; DRGR, III.42, 82; IV.4, 87; IV.10, 91; Romuald of Salerno, *Annales*, ed. W. Arndt (MGH SS 19, Hannover, 1866), ad an. 1088, 411–12.

<sup>27</sup> DRGR, IV.20–1, 98–9.

<sup>28</sup> DRGR, IV.22, 100. Bohemond had previously assisted Roger with the siege of Cosenza in May, 1091 (IV.17, 96).

<sup>29</sup> Romuald of Salerno, *Annales*, ad an. 1090, 412. Guiscard's subordinates had acknowledged Roger's right to accession as early as 1073: *Amatus*, VII.20, 312.

<sup>30</sup> Mathieu posited a *terminus post quem* of 1095 and a *terminus ante quem* of 1099 (in: GRW, 13).

<sup>31</sup> *Lupus*, ad an. 1096, 62; DRGR, IV.24, 102.

<sup>32</sup> *Lupus*, ad an. 1089, 62: 'facta est synodus ... in civitate Malfiae, ubi affuit etiam dux Rogerius et universi comites Apuleae et Calabriae aliarumque provinciarum.'

<sup>33</sup> DRGR, IV.27–29, 106–7; *Anonymi Barensis Chronicon*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, 5, Milan, 1724) [hereafter *ABC*], ad an. 1099, 155; *Lupus*, ad an. 1099, 63; Orderic Vitalis, *The ecclesiastical history of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (London, 1969–80) [hereafter *Orderic*] X, vol. 5, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Loud has made a similar observation with regard to Urban's relationship with Count Roger: 'Who could therefore advise him better on Greco-Latin relations, and quite probably also provide translators and Greek-speaking diplomats?' (*Age of Robert Guiscard*, 230).

had served as an envoy for the 'bishop' of Bari.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps William was one such individual — a south Italian diplomat familiar with the culture and court of Byzantium.

Even more compelling in regard to the questions of William's ethnic origin and intended audience is the praiseworthy treatment of the 'bold and noble' Argyros of Bari.<sup>36</sup> His father, Meles, had led two unsuccessful rebellions against Byzantine rule in the second decade of the eleventh century. Following Leo Marsicanus' description in the *Chronica monasterii Casinensis* [CMC],<sup>37</sup> observers since Gibbon have often styled Meles as a Lombard patriot or freedom fighter.<sup>38</sup> However, it is much more likely that Meles was seeking to gain by force what was denied through official means — that is, the office of imperial governor *κατεπάνω* (*katepano*).<sup>39</sup> Where the father failed, the son succeeded. Already a holder of the high court ranks of *πατρικίος* (*patrikios*), *βέστης* (*vestes*) and *μάγιστρος* (*magistros*),<sup>40</sup> Argyros was endowed with the office of *δοῦξ Ἰταλίας* (*doux Italias*) by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos in 1051.<sup>41</sup> Yet his path to success had briefly included collusion with the Lombardo-Norman forces then ravaging Byzantine Apulia in the early 1040s. His tenure as their leader was brief, and his abandonment of their cause highly acrimonious. Amatus of Montecassino recorded that Peter, the son of Ami, attempted to kill Argyros when the Lombard returned to the imperial side during the siege of Trani in 1042.<sup>42</sup> His crimes against his former allies were to continue, for Amatus noted that William Barbote was captured and sent in chains to Constantinople.<sup>43</sup> Malaterra never mentioned Argyros, but he undoubtedly had him in mind when referring to the 'Lombards of Apulia, always a most treacherous people' in the build-up to the fateful battle of Civitate in 1053; it was, after all, at Argyros' behest that the anti-Norman coalition fronted by Pope Leo IX marched into Apulia.<sup>44</sup>

Much like the career of Gisulf of Salerno, a negative treatment of Argyros should be unsurprising in a chauvinistic account detailing the rise of Norman power in eleventh-century southern Italy, since from the Norman perspective the Lombard was a loathsome turncoat. It is therefore of considerable importance to note that the son of Meles received a positive and extensive treatment in the GRW; indeed, from the second half of Book One until the end of Book Two, he is one of the major figures.<sup>45</sup> Assuredly, as the surname *Apuliensis* would suggest, William probably hailed from the same region as Argyros; it would therefore be expected that a local notable might receive more coverage than the Cassinese- and Sicilian-centric accounts of Amatus and Malaterra. Yet it should be underscored that there was no need for William to wax lyrical on Argyros' dignities and relations with the empire; he was neither an epic foil, nor a counterpoint to Norman heroism. Why then did the poet choose to devote a considerable portion of his work to the career of Argyros? The answer to this question may well be that William personally identified with his protagonist.

<sup>35</sup> Alexias, III.xii, 119.

<sup>36</sup> GRW, I.422, 120: 'audax et generosus'.

<sup>37</sup> Leo wrote that the reason for Meles' rebellion was so 'he might liberate his native land from tyranny': CMC, II.37, 238: 'tyrannide suam posset patriam liberare.'

<sup>38</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman empire*, ed. D. Womersley, 3 vols (London, 1994), vol. 3, LVI, 478: 'the patriot'; François Lenormant, *La Grande Grèce: paysages et histoire*, 2 vols (Paris, 1881–3), vol. 1, 378: 'le grand patriote apulien'; Einar Joranson, 'The inception of the career of the Normans in Italy — legend and history', *Speculum*, 23 (1948), 354: 'the Apulian patriot'; John Julius Norwich, *The Normans in Sicily* (London, 1992), 9: 'dedicated to the cause of Lombard independence'; Gordon Brown, *The Norman conquest of southern Italy and Sicily* (Jefferson, 2003), 40–1: 'that spirit of Lombard nationalism to which Melo and then Argyros had so successfully appealed'.

<sup>39</sup> Vera von Falkenhausen, 'Between two empires: southern Italy in the reign of Basil II', in: *Byzantium in the year 1000*, ed. P. Magdalino (Leiden-Boston-Köln, The Medieval Mediterranean, 45, 2003), 135–59 (155).

<sup>40</sup> *Annales Baresnes*, ed. G. H. Pertz (MGH SS 5, Hannover, 1844), ad an. 1042, 56; ABC, ad an. 1042, 1048, 151; *Ioannis Skylitzae Synopsis historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 5, Berlin, 1973) [hereafter *Skylitzes*], Con. IX, 8, 440.

<sup>41</sup> *Lupus protospatarius*, ed. G.H. Pertz (MGH SS 5, Hannover, 1844) [hereafter *Lupus*], ad an. 1051, 59; ABC, ad an. 1051, 151.

<sup>42</sup> Amatus, II.28, 93.

<sup>43</sup> Amatus, II.40, 107; compare with ABC, ad an. 1052, 151.

<sup>44</sup> DRGR, I.13–14, 14–15: 'Longobardi ... Apulienses, genus semper perfidissimum' (14); GRW, II.71–4, 136; S. Leonis *epistola ad Constantinum Monomachum*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64), vol. 143, 779B; *Annales Beneventani*, ed. G.H. Pertz (MGH SS 3, Hannover, 1839), ad an. 1053, 179–80.

<sup>45</sup> GRW, I.414–40, 120–2; I.482–5, 124; I.497–506, 126; I.511–75, 126–30; II.1–20, 132; II.38–74, 134–6; II.267–83, 146; II.490–4, 158.



Mathieu observed that the allure of Byzantium lingered long after the end of imperial rule in Apulia.<sup>46</sup> Graham Loud has since demonstrated that the Normans were significantly influenced by Byzantine administrative and cultural traditions.<sup>47</sup> The influence of, and respect for, the empire had long been evident among the Lombards, even outside the frontiers of Byzantine rule.<sup>48</sup> Unquestionably, various Lombard magnates of Apulia — Meles being the most famous example — were known to be restive under imperial rule, but this did not mean that they were united in a fervent desire to free themselves from Byzantine ‘oppression’, nor should we believe that they were working towards the object of uniting with their ‘brothers’ in the neighbouring Lombard principalities.<sup>49</sup> The Apulians would continue to be restive under Norman rule and, much like the Byzantine period, they were particularly resentful of conscription.<sup>50</sup> Raoul of Caen wrote that Lombards were happy enough to fight under the Norman banner during the First Crusade, but had deeply resented the coercive methods used by Guiscard to conscript them for the 1081–5 campaign against the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos.<sup>51</sup> As exemplified in the annals of the so-called *Lupus protospatarius*, the Lombards felt the war against the ‘royal city’ to be vainglorious and without a just cause. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Duke Robert’s death by flux in 1085 was nothing short of divine retribution.<sup>52</sup> William very much wrote from the Lombard perception in this regard. He too emphasised the unwarranted nature of the expedition and the coercive methods of recruitment and, significantly, used a Lombard protagonist to voice what amounted to Robert’s legacy.<sup>53</sup> Sichelgaita reproved her dying husband for ushering in an age of civil war — styled as the unleashing of the covetous Norman wolves (*lupi*) — in addition to the likelihood of a counter invasion by the Byzantines.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Emily Albu is most certainly correct to note that the final two books of the *GRW* are hardly pro-Norman; the underlying tone is unquestionably gloom-laden and ominous.<sup>55</sup> She observes that in the manner of the characterisation of Caesar in Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, Guiscard fights for glory and glory alone; his heroism is therefore ultimately unheroic. Just as Lucan’s Caesar had wrought havoc in Italy on account of his lust for *gloria*, so too had the duke.

So, William disapproved of the invasion of the empire and fashioned it from a Lombard perspective. But his Lombard sympathies had been a feature of the *GRW* from the outset. Reminding the audience of the Norman debt to Lombard leaders, not to mention that the first few decades of their ‘conquest’ was actually performed in the ancillary role as Lombard mercenaries — facts which are essentially ignored by Amatus and Geoffrey — William stresses that Argyros is the son of Meles, that ‘skilled protector’ who was the ‘first leader of the Norman people of Italy’.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, it is because Meles had been their benefactor that they choose to love (*amare*) the noble Argyros.<sup>57</sup> William always stressed the *nobilitas* of his Lombard and Byzantine protagonists, an approach often absent in his treatment of their Norman counterparts. Not only had Gisulf been used to draw attention to the perceived boorishness and uncultivated nature of the Normans, but the poet recorded that their leaders had openly recruited local malcontents and criminals into their ranks.<sup>58</sup> Conversely, not only was Argyros of illustrious descent, he had greatly augmented his nobility by serving the empire as a high-ranking dignitary. Argyros had

<sup>46</sup> Mathieu, in: *GRW*, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Loud, ‘Byzantine Italy and the Normans’, in: *Byzantium and the west c.850–c.1200: proceedings of the XVIII Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. J.D. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam, 1988), 215–33.

<sup>48</sup> As Barbara Kreutz has put it, ‘all Campanian rulers admired the visible aspects of Byzantine culture’: *Before the Normans: southern Italy in the ninth and tenth centuries* (Philadelphia, 1991), 99.

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Wickham, *Early medieval Italy: central power and local society 400–1000* (London, 1981), 157; Loud, *Age of Robert Guiscard*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> Amatus, II.8, 66. The context here is the imperial recruitment of local troops for the Sicilian campaign of 1038.

<sup>51</sup> *Radulfo Cadomensi Gesta Tancredi in expeditione Hierosolymitana* (Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux, 3, Paris, 1866), VIII, 610–11.

<sup>52</sup> *Lupus*, ad an. 1085, 62.

<sup>53</sup> *GRW*, IV.128–33, 210, IV.162–70, 212.

<sup>54</sup> *GRW*, V.301–22, 252–4.

<sup>55</sup> Emily Albu, *The Normans in their histories: propaganda, myth and subversion* (Woodbridge, 2001), 128–32, 135–6, 140–4.

<sup>56</sup> *GRW*, I.33, 100: ‘tutor ... prudens’; I.54, 102: ‘ducem ... gens Normannica primum ... Italiae’ (later repeated as ‘introducere Gallos ... in Italia ... primum’: ‘the first to lead the Gauls to Italy’ — I.420–1, 120).

<sup>57</sup> *GRW*, I.422–6, 120–2.

<sup>58</sup> *GRW*, I.165–6, 108: ‘Si vicinorum quis perniciosus ad ipsos / Confugiebat, eum gratanter suscipiebant.’

opposed the 'treacherous' George Maniakes, a rapacious general who dared to declare himself emperor of the 'holy empire'.<sup>59</sup> It was this service that had garnered him the respect of Constantine IX Monomachos himself; indeed, the emperor henceforward trusted Argyros with his most secret policies.<sup>60</sup> The treatment of Maniakes, one of the *GRW*'s villains, can be seen as a precursor to the portrayal of Guiscard in Book Five. Both were vainglorious, and they had attempted to remove respectively two emperors whom William admired: Constantine IX and Alexios I.

Opposing William's 'holy' and 'Roman' empire was not a praiseworthy policy. Of course, 'the Roman empire' or 'the empire of the Romans' (βασίλεια τῶν Ῥωμαίων) were Byzantine titles rarely used by Latin writers. It is therefore of some significance that William used such terminology more than once.<sup>61</sup> The *imperium sanctum* description was used twice when recounting Maniakes' revolt against Constantine IX, once in reference to the closing stages of the Norman siege of Bari (1068–71), and again when narrating the rise of the young general Alexios Komnenos, who successfully opposes 'the enemies of the empire, Bryennios and Basilakios'.<sup>62</sup> In regard to the siege of Bari, the besieged appeal to the *imperium sanctum* for military assistance. Again a traitor from the Norman perspective is featured: it is one of Guiscard's most rebellious Norman vassals, Joscelyn of Molfetta, who commands the imperial fleet sent to rescue the beleaguered Bariots.<sup>63</sup> William imbues Joscelyn with Argyros-like characteristics. In common with the son of Meles, Joscelyn is both a friend to, and an adviser for, a ruler of the 'holy empire' — in this case, another ruler much admired by William, Romanos IV Diogenes.<sup>64</sup>

It is significant to note that despite Meles of Bari's revolts, evidently his hostility towards the Byzantines neither affected his choice of attire nor the decision to give his son a Greek name: Ἀργυρός (Argyros: 'the silver').<sup>65</sup> Loud has observed that even though the imperial administration of Apulia allowed the Lombards to observe their own customs, including the use of their traditional legal code, some members of the aristocracy no doubt demonstrated a veneer of Byzantine culture. He also mentions a most interesting tenth-century charter that contains the signatures of two brothers: the first signature was written in Latin, the second in Greek.<sup>66</sup> Bilingualism is very much evident in the three sparse chronicles which drew on earlier annals of Bari. For example, the surname of the κατεπάνω Basil Boioannes denotes 'Ox-John' (βοῦς Ἰωάννης/*bous ioannes*); yet rather than transliterating Basil's *cognomen* into Latin, the annalists tended to translate it into an Italianate form — that is, the Italian words *bue* ('ox') and *Gianni* (John) formed the compound *Bugiano*.<sup>67</sup> In addition, there is a Greco-Latin sentence contained in the *Anonymi Barensis Chronicon* that transliterates from the Greek seal of the κατεπάνω Michael Dokeianos.<sup>68</sup>

Clearly, the knowledge of written and spoken Greek does not seem to have been uncommon among the Lombards of Apulia. It is highly likely that William of Apulia was one of these Lombards, for he too demonstrated knowledge of the imperial language. Mathieu observed that there are two etymologies of Greek terms in the *GRW*. One such etymology appears when mentioning the office of κατεπάνω for

<sup>59</sup> *GRW*, I.476–7, 124.

<sup>60</sup> *GRW*, II.278–80, 146. This was not a poetic exaggeration, for Skylitzes had 'the μάγιστρος Argyros Italos' advising Constantine IX on how to deal with the rebellion of Leon Tornikios in 1047 (*Skylitzes*, Con. IX, 8, 440). The *ABC* records that during the siege of Constantinople, 'the *magistros* Argiro sallied out during the night with a certain number of Franks and Greeks' ('Argiro magistro exivit sub nocte cum aliquanti Franci, et Graeci' — ad an. 1048, 151).

<sup>61</sup> *GRW*, I.343, 116: 'imperii ... Romani'; IV.568, 234: 'imperii ... Romani'.

<sup>62</sup> *GRW*, I.476–7, 124, 514–15, 126 (Maniakes); II.487, 158 (Bari); IV.87, 208 (Alexios); IV.88, 208: 'Hostes imperii, Basilachius atque Brienus'.

<sup>63</sup> *GRW*, II.541–2, 162.

<sup>64</sup> *GRW*, III.83–5, 168.

<sup>65</sup> *GRW*, I.14, 100: 'More virum Graeco vestitum, nomine Melum'.

<sup>66</sup> Loud, *Age of Robert Guiscard*, 33–4.

<sup>67</sup> *ABC*, ad an. 1019, 149; *Lupus*, ad an. 1019, 57; compare with Romuald of Salerno, *Annales*, ad an. 1012, 402: *Bugano*. Interestingly, Leo Marscianus opted for an Italo-Latin rendering: *Boiano* (*CMC*, II.37, 240).

<sup>68</sup> *ABC*, ad an. 1032, 149: 'Descendit Michail Protospata e[ri]tu tu bilu, Ke tu Ypodromu. Et adduxit Anatoliki epi tu y Kyacon Catp.' The Greek, emphasised here in italic type, was also present in one of the manuscripts used by Pertz for his edition of the annals of *Lupus* (ad an. 1032, 58, n. c). This version has the correct 'criti' rather than 'eriti' (*criti* = κριτής). For a commentary on the *Lupus* version, see W.J. Churchill, 'The Annales Barenses and the Annales Lupi protospatharii: critical edition and commentary' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1979), 271.



the first time. William explains the function of the office and, importantly, what he thinks to be the etymology of the word.<sup>69</sup> As Mathieu translates it: ‘Catapan, en Grec, signifie “selon tout”.’<sup>70</sup> Although she adds no further comment, *selon tout* (‘according to all’) obviously indicates William’s familiarity with κατά (‘according to’) and πᾶν (‘all’). She also demonstrated that William seems to have replicated a Greek pun on the name of Maniakes used by Christopher of Mytilene and Michael Psellos. William’s use of *furibunda mente* (‘by the raging mind’), she observed, may well recall Christopher’s Μανιάκου, μανιώδεος ...; Μανιάκης ... μαίνεται.<sup>71</sup> To know some words from another language is one thing, but to be able to pun in it suggests a comprehensive knowledge.

Since the Byzantines continued to admire ancient Greek poetry, it should not be surprising that Homeric texts of southern Italian provenance survive from the period in question: two copies of Homer, an *Iliad* lexicon and two *scholia* compilations of the same work.<sup>72</sup> It is interesting to observe, then, that the *GRW* contains an episode suggestive of the famous duel between Menelaus and Paris. Importantly, this heroic set piece is not recounted by the classical authors used by the poet — Virgil, Ovid and Statius<sup>73</sup> — nor is it mentioned in William’s sense by Dares Phrygius or Dictys Cretensis, whose *pseudoepigrapha* were much consulted by medieval Latin writers. The former has Paris being rescued by his brothers; the latter by the arrow of Pandarus and some troops.<sup>74</sup> The Homeric version, however, singles out Aphrodite, who ‘snatched Paris away ... [wrapping] him in swirls of mist’.<sup>75</sup> This is the episode William appears to know, because Alexios, representing Paris, is saved from Bohemond (Menelaus) by none other than a providential shroud. William’s penchant for Trojan War imagery prefixes the confrontation that will take place at Larissa, reminding the audience that from this very same place hailed ‘Achilles, the author of Troy’s destruction’.<sup>76</sup> Bohemond hears of Alexios’ presence in the imperial army and resolves to seek him out: ‘He charges towards the frightened enemy, as a hawk pursues larks’.<sup>77</sup> William’s imagery here is reminiscent of Homer, for when Menelaus notices Paris’ presence in the Trojan army, he is ‘thrilled like a lion lighting on some handsome carcass, lucky to find an antlered stag or wild goat’.<sup>78</sup> Alexios and his men, like Paris before them, are about to face annihilation, ‘but they are concealed by a dust storm of such size’.<sup>79</sup>

Scholars have long noted the remarkable similarities between the *GRW* and Anna Komnene’s *Alexias* of the mid-twelfth century.<sup>80</sup> The question as to how sections of William’s poem found their way into Komnene’s Byzantine history remains a perplexing one.<sup>81</sup> Mathieu felt that the similarities were to be explained by the use of common oral sources, although she conceded that a particular passage found in Komnene’s account can only have derived from the *GRW*.<sup>82</sup> Commenting on the various textual loans in

<sup>69</sup> *GRW*, I.87–90, 100–2.

<sup>70</sup> Mathieu, in: *GRW*, 103. A translation of ‘Quod catapan Graeci, nos iuxta dicimus omne’ (I.87, 102), a rather more accurate etymological exposition of the term than that by Raoul Glaber: ‘cognominatur Cataponti, eo scilicet quo iuxta mare inhabitet’ (‘he is named the Catapan, one may know, because he dwells close to the sea’ — *Historiarum libri quinque*, in: Rodulfus Glaber *Opera*, ed. and trans. J. France (Oxford, 1989), III.2, 96.

<sup>71</sup> Mathieu, in: *GRW*, 274.

<sup>72</sup> André Guillou, ‘Production and profits in the Byzantine province of Italy (tenth to eleventh centuries): an expanding society’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 28 (1974), 89–109 (101–2).

<sup>73</sup> On William’s usage of these authors, see Mathieu, in: *GRW*, n. 4, 61–2.

<sup>74</sup> Dares Phry. 21; Dictys Cret. 2.39, 40, in: *The Trojan War. The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*, ed. and trans. R.M. Frazer (Indiana, 1966). The former version is not actually a duel, just a brief scene in which Paris is chased by Menelaus. Paris responds to the chase by loosing an arrow at his pursuer, who is wounded as a result. But the cuckold persists and Paris is saved by the fraternal intervention of Hector and Aeneas.

<sup>75</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 3.380–1; trans. Robert Fagles, *Homer: the Iliad* (London, 1990), 141. It is significant to note here that Sichelgaita was similarly ‘snatched away’ (‘eripuit’) by providence (see above, n. 16).

<sup>76</sup> *GRW*, V.29, 236: ‘auctor Troianae cladis Achilles’.

<sup>77</sup> *GRW*, V.36–7, 238: ‘Irruit et trepidos hostes, ut nisis alaudas, / Insequitur.’

<sup>78</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 3.21–5; trans. Fagles, *The Iliad*, 129.

<sup>79</sup> *GRW*, V.38, 238: ‘at tantus contextit pulvis’.

<sup>80</sup> Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande*, xxxix–xl; Mathieu, in: *GRW*, 38–46.

<sup>81</sup> For a good discussion of the princess’ *Mezzogiorno* passages, see Graham Loud, ‘Anna Komnena and her sources for the Normans of southern Italy’, in: *Church and chronicle in the middle ages: essays presented to John Taylor*, ed. G.A. Loud and I.N. Wood (London, 1991), 41–57.

<sup>82</sup> Mathieu, in: *GRW*, 47.

the *Alexias*, Albu opined that some were clearly translated from William's Latin. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider this phenomenon in any detail, it does underscore, in the words of Albu, 'how closely William moved towards the Byzantine sphere'.<sup>83</sup> Aside from her opinion in this regard, it is of direct relevance that although Komnene's version of the Bohemond and Alexios episode agrees factually with the *GRW* — the dust storm, for example, is also featured — it does not replicate the Homeric allusion employed by the poet.<sup>84</sup> Hence, historical data that may have seemed to be suitably Homeric to the Latin poet was apparently lost on an erudite princess steeped in the epic tradition of classical antiquity. Since Homeric quotation and allusion were major features of Anna's *encomium* to her father, this point is potentially significant.

William's knowledge of Greek becomes even more convincing when sections of the *GRW* are compared with the histories by Byzantine contemporaries Michael Attaleiates and John Skylitzes; indeed, various facts reported by William are reminiscent of the phraseology, content and tone of their works. Yet, the question whether William drew on imperial sources or not has been disputed since the nineteenth century. In 1883, when quoting the available sources in relation to Michael Dokeianos' replacement by the son of Basil Boioannes (discussed below), Odon Delarc commented that the *GRW* was not worth quoting, since it clearly repeated in verse what the Greek sources — that is, Skylitzes and George Kedrenos — had reported in prose.<sup>85</sup> Mathieu disagreed, arguing that despite the factual similarities, there is no direct interdependence between the *GRW* and the imperial accounts.<sup>86</sup> She did, however, suggest that the reverse was true in regard to the history of Attaleiates, noting that William's version of the conversation between Romanos IV Diogenes and Sultan Alp Arslan in the aftermath of the Battle of Manzikert (1071) is presented 'in the same terms'.<sup>87</sup> But aside from these episodes, there are other ones that indicate William drew on Greek sources, a consideration that will now be the focus of this discussion.

Michael Angold has observed of the *GRW* that all five books begin with an assessment of Byzantine politics, and the often detailed information related bears witness to the fact that William 'was formidably well informed about contemporary Byzantine history'.<sup>88</sup> Not only was William knowledgeable about all things Byzantine, but his poem regularly agrees with imperial sources and their viewpoints. He was clearly interested in military matters, a fact not unnoticed by Albu, who suggested he may well have had a military background.<sup>89</sup> The poet underscored the importance of morale in regard to the success of the imperial army; he observed that *cohortes* tended to be deployed in successive waves so 'the enemy may be weakened, and their fear increased'.<sup>90</sup> If successful, while the enemy's morale and numbers seemed to diminish after successive unit assaults, since the imperial troops had not been deployed in an all-out attack, they were therefore of greater *élan* and numerical strength. He also observed the tactic that would regularly induce the enemy to flight. The general sent in the elite cavalry, the sight or charge of whom delivered the *coup de grâce*.<sup>91</sup> But William did not leave it there; his closing comment emphasised the important effect of the heavy cavalrymen (i.e. *κατάφρακτοι* / *kataphraktai*), for the morale of the army was reinforced by their example (*animo reparando suorum*).<sup>92</sup> This observation could not be more accurate. For example, at the Battle of Dorostolon in 971, Leo the Deacon noted that the lengthy and bloody battle

<sup>83</sup> Albu, *The Normans in their histories*, n. 55, 135.

<sup>84</sup> *Alexias*, V.vi, 158.

<sup>85</sup> Odon Delarc, *Les Normands en Italie depuis les premières invasions jusqu'à l'avènement de S. Grégoire VII* (Paris, 1883), 110, n. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Mathieu, in: *GRW*, 29.

<sup>87</sup> Mathieu, in: *GRW*, 294. Compare *GRW*, III.59–72, 166 with *Michaelis Attaliothae Historia*, ed. I. Bekker (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae [hereafter CSHB], Bonn, 1853) [hereafter *Attaleiates*], 165–6.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Angold, 'Knowledge of Byzantine history in the west: The Norman historians (eleventh and twelfth centuries)', *ANS*, 25 (2003), 19–33 (24–5 (quotation), 27).

<sup>89</sup> Albu, *The Normans in their histories*, 136–7.

<sup>90</sup> *GRW*, I.271, 112: 'Hostes debilitet, terroremque augeat illis.'

<sup>91</sup> The language is very specific about the *κατάφρακτοι*. A unit deployed in a wedge formation — known to the Byzantines as the *τρίγωνος παράταξις* (*trigonos parataxis*) — was mentioned ('cuneus Graecorum mittitur unus' — 267). He also wrote of cavalrymen personally selected by the army's leader ('equitum princeps ... magis electo' — 272–3) as engaging in a forceful and irresistible charge ('viresque retundere prorsus' — 274).

<sup>92</sup> *GRW*, I.275, 114.

hung in the balance until the Emperor John I Tzimiskes sent in the ‘iron-covered horsemen’ (παυσίδηροι ἱππότες). Their deployment buoyed the weary spirit of the army, prompting an overwhelming mass charge on the ‘Russians’.<sup>93</sup>

The significance of the army's morale was underscored by the late eleventh-century Byzantine historian John Skylitzes. Referring to the Lombardo-Norman attacks on Apulia in the early 1040s, he castigated Michael Dokeianos — the κατεπάνω was styled as an ‘unfit man’ (ἀνεπιτήδειος-ἄνθρωπος) — for continuing to deploy already defeated, rather than fresh, troops against the invaders. The act was all the more deplorable given that his replacement, Exaugoustos Boioannes — an ‘able man’ (πρακτικόν ἄνδρα) — was therefore left with a diminutive and demoralised army.<sup>94</sup> William implied that Michael's incompetence was responsible for the loss of the greater proportion of the imperial army; indeed, it was precisely because of this that the emperor, ‘under whose protection the Roman empire continued’, replaced him.<sup>95</sup> While Amatus wrote also of Dokeianos' incompetence and resulting dismissal, he did not hold this particular κατεπάνω as being responsible for the harsh punishment meted out in Sicily to Arduin, commander of the Lombardo-Norman cavalry contingent. To the monk, as well as Malaterra, the perpetrator of the act was George Maniakes, whereas William and Skylitzes stated that it was Dokeianos.<sup>96</sup> To the latter two, and to a certain extent Michael Attaleiates, it was an example of Michael's lack of leadership skills, and the flogging of Arduin was directly responsible for the Lombardo-Norman invasion of Apulia in the first place.<sup>97</sup> The GRW regularly agrees with the various Byzantine sources, and at one point seems to echo Skylitzes — that is, the sources on which he drew<sup>98</sup> — when it came to the details of Michael's successor:

It is said that the conqueror Basil sired him,  
Who had forced the Gauls to flee under the leadership of Meles.<sup>99</sup>

The *Synopsis* has much the same report, although the achievements of the elder Bugiano were a little exaggerated:

He hailed from the family of Boioannes, whom the Emperor Basil had dispatched to Italy, and he [the elder] brought all of Italy up to Rome under the subordination of the *Basileus*.<sup>100</sup>

A comparison of these two passages, among others, stresses just how strongly the GRW is as much a Byzantine history as it is Lombardo-Norman.

Skylitzes stated, and William implied, that the younger Boioannes stood little chance of success given Dokeianos' repeated failures to counter the incursions. While the former's narrative of such events terminated soon afterwards, William continued. In what has usually been put forward as another example of William's negative perception of the Byzantine military, the poet wrote of Exaugoustos' plight. The hapless κατεπάνω was attributed with a classicising exhortation to his men,

<sup>93</sup> Leonis Diaconi Historiae libri decem, ed. C.B. Hase (CSHB, 11, Bonn, 1828), VIII.9–10, 140–141. For observations on the importance of the heavy cavalry to the army's morale, see Eric McGeer, *Sowing the dragon's teeth: Byzantine warfare in the tenth century* (Washington D.C., 1995), 254, 299, 316.

<sup>94</sup> Skylitzes, Con. IX, 3, 426.

<sup>95</sup> GRW, I.341–3, 116: ‘Vires quas Michael amiserat ut reparentur. / Hunc tamen esse ducem vetat amplius agminis huius, / Imperii sub quo Romani cura manebat’; compare with Skylitzes, Con. IX, 3, 426.

<sup>96</sup> Amatus, II.24, 86–7; DRGR, I.8, 11–12.

<sup>97</sup> While Michael Attaleiates did not refer to this incident, he seems to allude to it when criticising Dokeianos for failing to treat allies (σύμμαχοι) — the Λατίνοι (*Latinoi*) and Ἀλβανοί (*Albanoi*) — with due respect. See Attaleiates, 9.

<sup>98</sup> The *Synopsis* was previously thought of as being completed not long after the final date of its subject matter (1057). However, Catherine Holmes' detailed analysis of what is the principal source for the subject of her stimulating book dates it to the first half of Alexios' rule (1081–1118). See *Basil II and the governance of empire (976–1025)* (Oxford, 2005), 85–9. Skylitzes, like other synoptic historians, drew on evidence more contemporaneous with the events narrated. On the variegated source material, see Jonathan Shepard, ‘A suspected source of Scylitzes' *Synopsis Historiarum*: the great Catacalon Cecaumenus’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 16 (1992), 171–81.

<sup>99</sup> GRW, I.347–8, 116: ‘Dicitur hunc victor genuisse Basilius ille, / Qui duce sub Melo Gallos dare terga coegit.’

<sup>100</sup> Skylitzes, Con. IX, 3, 426: καὶ εἰς ἐκείνον ἀναφέροντα τὴν τοῦ γένους ἀναφορὰν τὸν ἐπὶ Βασιλείου τοῦ Βασιλείως ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ πεμφθέντα Βοϊωάννην, ὃς πᾶσαν τὴν Ἰταλίαν μέχρι Ρώμης τότε τῷ Βασιλεῖ παρεστήσατο.

emphasising the glory of their ancestors. Troy, Phillip and Alexander were invoked, and while William was less specific when it came to more recent *duces*, he almost certainly alluded to leaders such as Nikephoros II Phokas, John I Tzimiskes, Basil II and his general, Basil Boioannes, when reminding his men that ‘the westerly regions and all areas of the world were accustomed to fearing the reputation of the Greeks’.<sup>101</sup>

Commenting on this speech, Wolf argued that ‘to William, the Greeks themselves were painfully aware of their own loss of stature’.<sup>102</sup> But this interpretation fails to take into account William’s purpose for the speech. It ties in with a recurring theme of the poem: when the *imperium sanctum* is under good leadership, it is a powerful adversary. The pre-battle exhortation itself directly continues on from the situation in Apulia. Dokeianos has been replaced, and his successor of not only illustrious, but warlike, descent is left with the unenviable task of trying to revive the spirits of a defeated and depleted army. Like the majority of the southern Italian accounts, William indicated that matters were improved when reinforcements were sent from Sicily. But the general’s plight is near hopeless. What the younger Boioannes is concerned about is that his troops seem to prefer flight to a fight. Here William was contrasting with the great morale of the Normans, for he had already said of the Battle of Olivento (1041) fought seven months earlier:

The victory of the Gauls increases their strong resolve;  
No longer are they alarmed at continuing the war against the Greeks.<sup>103</sup>

Hence, when the context shifts to the situation faced by Exaugoustos Boioannes, William notes that they were not intimidated by the information received by their spies or scouts (*exploratores*). For while it became clear they were about to do battle against the son of the man who had inflicted a heavy defeat on them at Canne in 1018, the feeling was expressed that although ‘the commander had changed, the people had not’.<sup>104</sup> William’s emphasis on Boioannes’ descent is meant to convey the idea that while the situation is grim, perhaps the son possesses the ability of the father; a potential characteristic that even his troops must have hoped for. More obviously, a sense of generational and political change is set in motion.

Although the ensuing battle at Montepeloso (Irsina) on 3 September 1041 is eventually won by the Normans, William repeatedly stresses that the Byzantine troops fought with renewed vigour; indeed, their great ferocity had put the enemy to flight.<sup>105</sup> It was an act of individual bravery, however, that turned the rout into a victory:

Rushing suddenly into the middle of the enemy,  
Walter exhorts the fleeing Normans to return to battle.<sup>106</sup>

The younger Boioannes is a demonstration of what the Byzantines can achieve under a competent general; he is very much a thematic precursor to the heroic Romanos IV and Alexios I Komnenos, the leaders driven to restore the military reputation of William’s Roman empire. The poet would repeat this motif when recounting Guiscard’s invasion of 1081–5. Despite at one point referring to the habit of

<sup>101</sup> GRW, I.361–2, 118: ‘Partibus occiduus Graecorum fama timori / Omnibus et mundi regionibus esse solebat.’ The tenth-century *Chronicle of Salerno* referred to Phokas as a ‘vir bonus et iustus atque diversorum gentium preliator’: *Chronicon Salernitanum*, ed. U. Westerberg (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 3, Stockholm, 1959), 173, 555. To Orderic Vitalis, Byzantine military prowess was an ancient inheritance; the Norman campaign of 1081–5 was an attack on a people ‘warlike since the ancient times of Adrastus and Agamemnon’: Orderic, VII, vol. 4, 16: ‘bellicosam a priscis temporibus Adrastris et Agamemnonis Greciam invadebat.’

<sup>102</sup> Wolf, *Making history*, 129; compare with 130: ‘This summary of Greek military history ... underscored the decadence of their modern heirs.’

<sup>103</sup> ‘Gallorum vires victoria mentibus auget, / Nec contra Danaos iam bella gerenda pavesunt.’ GRW, I.290–1, 114.

<sup>104</sup> GRW, I.376–8, 118: ‘Exploratores Galli misere, paratus / Ut Danaum videant. Referunt ad bella paratos, / Et non mutata mutatum gente magistrum.’

<sup>105</sup> GRW, I.385–6, 118–20: ‘Cumque diu pugnam Gallis patientibus Argi / Acriter instarent victores iam prope facti.’

<sup>106</sup> ‘Proripitur subito medios Gualterus in hostes, / Normannos hortans ad bella redire fugaces.’ GRW, I.387–8, 120.

*fuga* during the campaign,<sup>107</sup> he observed that since Alexios I was cognisant of the ever-changing outcomes of *bellum*, the emperor nonetheless returned to the fray and began to secure victories.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the poet declared ten lines later that Alexios 'has exercised manly [*virilis*] battle against the Normans'.<sup>109</sup>

The questions of leadership, morale and restoration are recurring themes of the poem, and Byzantine affairs always take centre stage. The *GRW*'s chronology and accompanying interpretation accords strongly with the opinions of Byzantine historians, both medieval and modern. None would disagree with the view that the empire reached its height of power under Basil II (d. 1025), and that after his death Constantinopolitan fortunes incrementally declined until the restoration under Alexios I. William saw it similarly, and he chose to explain why this had happened. While the empire had formerly enjoyed strong leadership, the decline had particularly set in during the reign of Michael VII Doukas (1071–8) and his brother Constantine. Their rule was 'destructive' for the 'power of the Greeks' since *ars belli* was neglected in favour of luxury and idle pursuits.<sup>110</sup> Anna Komnene would opine similarly about her father's predecessors, who 'had lived a life of luxury and pleasure; because of their wanton habits they concerned themselves with quail catching and other more disreputable pastimes'.<sup>111</sup> While Malaterra neither displayed William's deep knowledge nor interest in imperial affairs, it is interesting to note that he did make the same observation in regard to the imperial administration of the 1070s.<sup>112</sup> But William went further than this, recording an example of the principal problem that plagued the empire throughout the century: the emperors under the sway of the civilian party had allowed the imperial frontiers to be overrun.

As is evident from the work of Anna Komnene's future husband, Nikephoros Bryennios, Michael VII was essentially a puppet ruler; the realm was effectively controlled by the λογοθέτης τοῦ δρόμου, Nikephoritzes.<sup>113</sup> Bryennios also noted that Michael's predecessor, Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–71), had attempted to restore the empire's former military ascendancy.<sup>114</sup> Much more compelling is the contention that the pertinent section of the *GRW* often reads like a poetic abridgment of Michael Attaleiates' *Ἱστορίαι*, a work completed about twenty-five years before the poet's. To illustrate just how significant this is, although Amatus briefly alluded to the Battle of Manzikert (1071), neither he nor Geoffrey Malaterra mentioned Romanos IV and related events on which William was so well informed.<sup>115</sup> Attaleiates unequivocally blamed the Doukas family for the reversal of the empire's military fortunes: Romanos was a hero who had been most grievously wronged.<sup>116</sup> The emperors from Constantine IX Monomachos onwards had been more interested in stately pomp than warfare, and Michael Doukas' odious rule was characterised by actions against internal, rather than external, enemies.<sup>117</sup> William wrote similarly, observing that on account of the 'idleness of the rulers' (*ignavia ... rectorum*), the elite

<sup>107</sup> *GRW*, V.66–7, 238: 'solitique fugacibus Argi / Elabi pedibus, redeunt properanter ad urbis / Moenia Larissae' ('Accustomed to flying swiftly, the Greeks slip away by their feet, hastily returning to the walls of the city of Larissa').

<sup>108</sup> *GRW*, V.22–3, 236: 'Et quia bellorum varios non ambigit esse / Eventus, conatur adhuc ad bella redire.' The victories soon followed. After the inconclusive battle at Larissa, Alexios captured the Italo-Norman camp. The spoils gathered to this point were seized, and the Norman *pedites* defending the camp were decimated (V.43–9, 238; compare with *Alexias*, V.vi, 158).

<sup>109</sup> *GRW*, V.31–2, 236–8: 'pugnamque virilem / Contra Normannos exercuit.'

<sup>110</sup> *GRW*, III.1–6, 164: 'Interea Michael Romani iura regebat / Imperii cum fratre suo, qui nomine dictus / Constantinus erat: quorum dominatio Graecis / Perniciosa fuit, quia bellis otia semper / Postpositis studuere sequi, luxusque dolosi / Illecebris captos foedarat inertia turpis.'

<sup>111</sup> *Alexias*, V.viii, 162; *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, trans. E.R.A. Sewter (London, 1969), 175.

<sup>112</sup> *DRGR*, III.13, 64: 'gens, deliciis at voluptatibus, potiusquam belli studiis ex more dedita'.

<sup>113</sup> *Nicéphore Bryennios Histoire*, ed. P. Gautier (CFHB 9, Brussels, 1975) [hereafter *Bryennios*], II.1, 142–4; see also *Attaleiates*, 180–3.

<sup>114</sup> *Bryennios*, II.1, 142. Although Romanos did not receive the heroic treatment found in Attaleiates and Skylitzes' continuation, for Bryennios was on good terms with the Doukai (Gautier, in: *Bryennios*, 117, n. 6).

<sup>115</sup> Amatus did know of Romanos' deposition and blinding, yet his reportage was relatively vague and a little confused. For example, John Doukas ('Cesaire'), Romanos ('Auguste'), Eudokia ('moillier de lo sage "Cesaire"') and Michael ('lo autre Imper-eor') were not named, nor was he correct in asserting that Eudokia was the wife of John Doukas (*Amatus*, I.9–13, 17–19).

<sup>116</sup> *Attaleiates*, 175–7.

<sup>117</sup> *Attaleiates*, 119, 212.

*equites* — that is, the *κατάφρακτοι* — were not deployed against the Turkic invaders of Anatolia; hence a ‘distinguished knight’ (*equiti egregio*) — perhaps an echo of Attaleiates or his source<sup>118</sup> — was married to the mother of Michael and Constantine, Eudokia.<sup>119</sup>

Attaleiates was fond of referring to the decisions of leading imperial officials as the deliberations ‘of the senators’ (τοῦ βουλευτηρίου).<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, when narrating the decision to raise Romanos to the rulership of the empire by marriage to Eudokia, it was said to have been proposed by one of the senators.<sup>121</sup> William used similar language: the ‘marriage was decreed by the senate’ (*decreto nupta senatus*).<sup>122</sup> Tellingly, William only used *senatus* on one other occasion. Again it was used in reference to the empire, mentioning Michael V’s intrigues against Zoë, which continued despite ‘hindering by the senate’ (*prohibente senatu*).<sup>123</sup> William was also accurate here: Lynda Garland has noted that although Michael’s tonsuring of Zoë in 1042 did receive the approval of the imperial power brokers, ‘later events show that many of them had reservations’.<sup>124</sup> Michael had previously been careful in making allegations against Zoë, for she was favoured by Attaleiates’ βουλή; hence the ensuing revolution included support from among their ranks, along with the populace and the imperial guard.<sup>125</sup>

As William had previously expressed, someone was needed to rescue the ‘frightened Christian people who were living in that lovely place, Romania’.<sup>126</sup> A saviour appears, and as Angold has observed, ‘Romanos Diogenes is treated as a hero’.<sup>127</sup> William had used a variant of the ‘lovely place’ (*loca deliciosa*) phrase earlier in regard to Apulia, the land the Normans would conquer (*locus ... amoenus*).<sup>128</sup> As Albu noted, this was a phrase much loved by ancient and medieval writers.<sup>129</sup> It is highly likely that William was reusing the phrase deliberately: just as the ravening Norman *lupi* had devoured Apulia, so too had Anatolia been consumed by the hungry Turks. The *imperium sanctum* was flanked by the covetous, a literary styling not only employed by Orderic Vitalis,<sup>130</sup> but also used by Byzantine poets and historians after the Second Crusade.<sup>131</sup> Such an interpretation is commensurate with William’s Byzantine sympathies; Albu is surely correct to state that the ‘*Gesta* makes Byzantium the only true empire and the spiritual and political mistress of the western world’.<sup>132</sup> But William, like Attaleiates, felt it was an empire that required a helmsman from the military aristocracy. While the martial reputation of the empire had achieved an incremental restoration by an imperial representative in Italy — that is, by the younger *Bugiano* — it was Romanos who paved the way for the

<sup>118</sup> Attaleiates, 97: ἀνίσταται τις τῶν εὐπατριδῶν, Ῥωμανὸς βεστάρχης, ὃ τὸ ἐπικλῆν Διογένης (‘hailing of noble lineage, the *vestarches* Romanos, known as Diogenes’); compare with GRW, I.15–7, 164: ‘*equiti egregio ... / Diogenes cognomen erat*.’

<sup>119</sup> GRW, III.13–6, 164: ‘*Hos contra nullos equites ignavia misit / Rectorum: quare decreto nupta senatus / Est equiti egregio Romano mater eorum, / Pectus amans plus quam genus Eudochia mariti*.’

<sup>120</sup> Either that, or references were made to decisions reached by, or people elected to, ‘the senate’ (βουλή — e.g. 71, 143, 167). Attaleiates looked to ancient Rome regularly for inspiration and a sense of imperial continuity: A. Kaldellis, ‘A Byzantine argument for the equivalence of all religions: Michael Attaleiates on ancient and modern Romans’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 14 (2007), 1–22. While Skylitzes and Michael Psellos employed similar terminology, their usage was not as classically minded as Attaleiates: Skylitzes, Mich. V, 1, 417: σύγκλητος; Michel Psellos, *Chronographie*, ed. E. Renauld, 2 vols. (Paris, 1967) [hereafter *Psellos*], vol. 1, Mich. V, 23, 100: βουλή.

<sup>121</sup> Attaleiates, 101: εἰς νοῦν τινὸς τῶν τοῦ βουλευτηρίου προϊστυμένων ὁ Διογένης ἀφίκετο.

<sup>122</sup> GRW, III.14, 164.

<sup>123</sup> GRW, I.466, 124.

<sup>124</sup> Attaleiates, 12–7; Psellos, vol. 1, Mich. V, 17–35, 96–108; Skylitzes, Mich. V, 1–2, 416–21; Lynda Garland, *Byzantine empresses: women and power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204* (London, 1999), 140–6 (quote from 142).

<sup>125</sup> Garland, *Byzantine empresses*, 142–6.

<sup>126</sup> GRW, III.8–9, 164: ‘*gens territa cristicolarum, / Qui Romaniae loca deliciosa colebant*.’

<sup>127</sup> Angold, ‘Knowledge of Byzantine history’, 25.

<sup>128</sup> GRW, I.171, 108.

<sup>129</sup> Albu, *The Normans in their histories*, 115.

<sup>130</sup> Orderic, vol. 4, VII, 14–6. Alexios, the ruler of the ‘*sanctum imperium*’ (14), is assailed from all ‘quarters of the world’ (‘*quattuor mundi climatibus*’ — 16). Yet, the covetous invaders fail, for God both defended and cared for the emperor and his kingdom (‘*Deo evasit ... Deus defensat ac refovet*’ — 16).

<sup>131</sup> Elisabeth and Michael Jeffreys, ‘The “wild beast from the west”: immediate literary reactions in Byzantium to the Second Crusade’, in: *The Crusades from the perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim world*, ed. A.E. Laiou and R.P. Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington D.C., 2001), 101–16.

<sup>132</sup> Albu, *The Normans in their histories*, 135.



chivalrous *rector* who would finally resolve the ongoing problem: ‘the mighty ruler of the Roman empire’, Alexios I Komnenos.<sup>133</sup>

With the *ignavus* civil party checked, the candidate from the military faction immediately turned the empire’s attention to the ‘business of war’ (*negotia belli*).<sup>134</sup> Attaleiates wrote similarly, styling Romanos as ‘a scholar of Ares’ hoping to ‘rejuvenate the Romans’.<sup>135</sup> A Byzantine contemporary took a dim view of Romanos’ military ability; the ‘consul of the philosophers’<sup>136</sup> had the temerity to suggest that he knew more about *ars belli* than the professional who had devoted his life to it.<sup>137</sup> But this ‘armchair general’, Michael Psellos, reflected the view of the civil party to which he belonged; it was on his advice that the warlike emperor was deposed in favour of one who most suited the designs of the civil bureaucracy: William’s *ignavus* Michael.<sup>138</sup> Romanos’ Anatolian campaign had made this possible, for despite some successes,<sup>139</sup> the imperial army was defeated at Manzikert in 1071.<sup>140</sup> William’s account again seems to be reminiscent of the version by Michael Attaleiates, for he lamented that it was the intrigues of the Doukas family that brought about the emperor’s deposition and subsequent blinding.<sup>141</sup> In this assertion he was again accurate. Following Attaleiates and Skylitzes’ continuation, Byzantinists also point to the treachery of the Doukai as being an important reason for the defeat at Manzikert: Romanos may well have secured victory had it not been for, as Sir Charles Oman expressed it, ‘the abominable misconduct’ of Andronikos Doukas.<sup>142</sup>

Taking such considerations into account, many of William’s alleged anti-Byzantine missives can actually be seen as pro-Byzantine. Such sections of the poem are hardly contemptuous if they generally accord with the opinions of his Byzantine contemporaries, and it is safe to assume that they were not anti-Byzantine. Unlike Malaterra and, most notably, Amatus, William’s intimate knowledge of imperial affairs meant that he was aware of the two factions constantly vying for the reins of state. He knew that the Byzantines were not idle or unwarlike; it was just that sometimes their rulers were. This contention is considerably reinforced when narrowing the focus to the commonly held notion of ‘effeminate Greeks’ in the GRW.

Various scholars, including the GRW’s most recent editor, have viewed the poem as hostile towards the Byzantines.<sup>143</sup> The most frequently cited evidence for this interpretation is the Arduin at Aversa episode. The Lombard mercenary commander, then an imperial garrison commander (τοποτηρητής) of northern Apulia,<sup>144</sup> is presented in the following manner:

He hastens to Aversa and tells the Normans all that  
Has happened to him. He vehemently rebukes them

<sup>133</sup> GRW, IV.567–8, 234: ‘imperii rector Romani maximus’.

<sup>134</sup> GRW, III.18, 164.

<sup>135</sup> Attaleiates, 101–4: Ἀρέος ἐστὶ φοιτητής, καὶ καινοποιοῖσιν τὰ Ῥωμαίων (104).

<sup>136</sup> Skylitzes, *Prooemium*, 3: ὑπατος τῶν φιλοσόφων.

<sup>137</sup> Psellos, vol. 2, Rom. IV.10–1, 157–8, Rom. IV.20, 162.

<sup>138</sup> Psellos, vol. 2, Rom. IV.24, 163. As Angold notes, Romanos’ policy was the antithesis of that pursued by the civil party. For example, while they had let the provincial armies (θέματα) become ‘more or less moribund’, the new emperor strove to resurrect them: Angold, *The Byzantine empire 1025–1204*, 20; see also Warren Treadgold, *A history of the Byzantine state and society* (Stanford, 1997), 602.

<sup>139</sup> GRW, III.21–3, 164.

<sup>140</sup> William’s regularly overlooked account sparked the scholar who would become his editor to address the problem: Mathieu, ‘Une source négligée de la bataille de Mantzikert: les ‘Gesta Roberti Wiscardi’ de Guillaume d’Apulie’, *Byzantion*, 20 (1950), 89–103.

<sup>141</sup> GRW, III.73–92, 168.

<sup>142</sup> Attaleiates, 161–2; Psellos, vol. 2, Rom. IV.19–20, 161–2; Bryennios, I.17, 115–17; Ἡ συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτζη, ed. E.T. Tzolakes (Ἡταιρεία Μακεδονικῶν Σπουδῶν, Ἰδρυμα Μελετῶν Χερσονήσου τοῦ Αἰμου, 105, Thessaloniki, 1968), 103–86 (148–9); compare with Charles Oman, *The art of war in the middle ages*, 2 vols (New York, 1924), vol. 1, 221; Angold, *The Byzantine empire 1025–1204*, 22–3; Treadgold, *Byzantine state and society*, 603; J. Haldon, *The Byzantine wars* (Stroud, 2001), 125.

<sup>143</sup> Mathieu, in: GRW, 22; J. Décarreaux, *Normands, papes, et moines: cinquante ans de conquêtes et de politique religieuse en Italie méridionale et en Sicile [milieu de XIe siècle-début du XIIe]* (Paris, 1974), 21–2; Jean-Charles Payen, ‘L’Image du Grec dans la chronique normande: sur un passage de Raoul de Caen’, in: *Images et signes de l’orient dans l’occident médiéval* (Aix-en-Provence, 1982), 269–80; Wolf, *Making history*, 129–30; Taviani-Carozzi, *La terreur du monde*, 423; Nick Webber, *The evolution of Norman identity 911–1154* (Woodbridge, 2005), 74–5.

<sup>144</sup> ABC, ad an. 1041 150.

For leaving a land as rich as Apulia with the womanly Greeks;  
 A cowardly people dissolved by drunkenness and hangovers,  
 Who are frequently put to flight by small numbers of the enemy, and  
 Whose cumbersome clothing and armour — he alleges — are unsuitable.  
 The Normans, although previously forced to turn back from  
 Apulia by the manliness of the Greeks, are inspired to go  
 Back there with stronger, more numerous forces. [ll. 222–31]<sup>145</sup>

While not engaging in a discussion of this passage, Albu commented that ‘William knows these indictments of the Byzantines ... But this is not the prevailing view of *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*.’<sup>146</sup> This is most certainly the case, for it has already been noted that in Book Five William had Alexios Komnenos giving ‘manly [virilis] battle against the Normans’. There is also the stylisation of the Byzantine generals Bryennios and Basilakios as ‘eminent Greeks, powerful in war and resources’.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, William noted that while Robert Guiscard was confident in the prowess of his ‘elite cavalrymen’ prior to the Battle of Dyrrachion (1081), he advised them not to be overly confident (*temerarius*).<sup>148</sup> The reason for this was made plain: the duke was concerned at the prospect of engaging Alexios’ ‘hostile wedges’ — that is, the *κατάφρακτοι* arranged in their characteristic blunt-nosed wedge formation.<sup>149</sup>

To return to the Aversa episode just cited, Ewan Johnson has observed quite rightly that Arduin’s *femineus* dismissal (line 225) is negated four lines later: *Danaum virtute* (‘by the manliness of the Greeks’). Others have interpreted this episode somewhat differently. Jean-Charles Payen, for example, quoted lines 225–8 with the suggestion that they amounted to ‘une sévère accusation d’homosexualité’.<sup>150</sup> Both paraphrasing and quoting from the GRW, Rupert Willoughby, among others, has stressed that the Normans perceived the Byzantines to be ‘cowardly and effeminate’.<sup>151</sup>

Aside from the fact that William’s Arduin episode lends itself to a more balanced interpretation, there are four other considerations that cannot go unmentioned. Firstly, since the speech is attributed to a Lombard, it is of little use when attempting to discern Norman perceptions. Secondly, it is likely that the episode in question was copied from a local source, which is no longer extant. Like the GRW, Amatus’ version had Arduin speak of ‘homes feminines’ and ‘homes comme fames [who] liquel demorent en molt ricche et espaciose terre’.<sup>152</sup> Later redactions of the CMC feature sections copied from Amatus’ *Historia Normannorum*, and hence sentences and sometimes passages of it are the only glimpse available of Amatus’ original work which, unfortunately for posterity, survives only in an early fourteenth-century Old French translation.<sup>153</sup> When the French and Latin words are compared, it is possible that the CMC redactor — probably Guido — borrowed from Amatus: ‘effeminatos ... Grecos ... terram opulentissimam’.<sup>154</sup> However, it is more likely that the CMC drew on the same source as William, for this version, unlike Amatus’, contains the rejoinder that Arduin’s dismissive appraisal was an

<sup>145</sup> ‘Aversam properat. Normannis omnia narrat / Quae sibi contigerant, vehementer et increpat illos, / Appula multimodae cum terra sit utilitatis, / Femineis Graecis cur permittatur haberi, / Cum genus ignavum sit, quod comes ebrietatis / Crapula dissolvat, minimo saepe hoste fugatos / Vestituque graves, non armis asserit aptos. / Normanni, quamvis Danaum virtute coacti / Appula rura prius dimittere, rursus adire / Hoc stimulante parant, numero cum viribus aucto.’ GRW, I.222–31, 110, ll. 222–31.

<sup>146</sup> Albu, *The Normans in their histories*, 135.

<sup>147</sup> GRW, IV.89, 208: ‘Insignes Graeci, bellis opibusque potentes’.

<sup>148</sup> GRW, IV.355–6, 222: ‘Is licet egregios equites sibi sciret adesse, / Nil ineundo tamen temerarius esse volebat.’

<sup>149</sup> GRW, IV.361–2, 224: ‘Non a Dirachio procul expectare volebat / Hostiles cuneos.’

<sup>150</sup> Payen, ‘L’Image du Grec’, 274.

<sup>151</sup> Rupert Willoughby, ‘The shock of the new’, *History Today*, 49:8 (1999), 36–42 (38); see also Brown, *The Norman conquest of southern Italy and Sicily*, 37: ‘whom they had learned to despise as ... effeminate’.

<sup>152</sup> Amatus, II.17, 75–6: ‘Venez après moi ... qué sachiez que je vouz menerai à homes feminines, c’est à homes comme fames, liquel demorent en molt ricche et espaciose terre’ (Follow me ... I will take you to womanly men, that is, to men like women, who live in a most wealthy and spacious land’).

<sup>153</sup> For the textual relationships between Amatus’ history and the CMC, see Loud, ‘Introduction’, 20–3, and Hoffman’s introduction for the complicated nature of the various authors, manuscripts and redactions (in: CMC, vii–xii, xviii, xxx–xxxiv).

<sup>154</sup> CMC, II.66, 299.

allegation (*asserens*, cf. GRW, 228: *asserit*), not a fact. Moreover, like the GRW, the CMC coupled ‘loose, idle, free-and-easy’ (*remissus*, cf. GRW, 226: *ignavus*) with ‘womanly, effeminate’ (*effeminatus*, cf. GRW, 225: *femineus*), whereas Amatus just had ‘womanly men, that is, men like women’ (*homes feminines*, *c’est à homes comme fames*). Yet is interesting to note that an earlier GRW episode paraphrasing Arduin’s speech to the Normans in Sicily is highly reminiscent of the language used by Amatus: ‘quasi femina Graecus’.<sup>155</sup>

Thirdly, it may well be that the speech of Arduin is an accurate representation of the type of recruiting rhetoric used by Lombard press gangs. William’s treatment of Meles in Book One attests as much: his speech is quoted, then paraphrased and subsequently repeated, by the Normans upon their return to Normandy.<sup>156</sup> They tell their people that the princely leader has promised an ‘easy victory’ over the local imperial troops.<sup>157</sup> Such lines are often quoted as evidence for anti-Byzantine sentiment. Yet Boioannes appears on the scene soon afterwards with professional troops and annihilates Meles’ forces, an outcome William regularly recalled for his audience. Moreover, it should always be remembered that Malaterra had the Lombards of Apulia — that is, Argyros and his officers — styling the Normans as ‘unwarlike, effeminate and few in number’.<sup>158</sup>

Lastly, although some have seen a Norman disdain for Byzantine attire in the version of Arduin’s speech contained in the GRW, the translation of the pertinent line (228) provided above emphasises a significantly different interpretation. Indeed, both discussions and translations of the Aversa passage have yet to emphasise the military import of William’s Latin. The ‘cumbersome clothing and unsuitable armour’ stylisation (*Vestituque graves, non armis ... aptos*) seems not to be a reference to the perceived ‘effeminate’ attire of Byzantine males, as argued particularly by Payen, Wolf and, most recently, Johnson.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, judging by the translations and interpretations provided by Payen and Johnson, Mathieu’s rendering has been preferred: ‘que leur costume les embarrassait dans les combats’.<sup>160</sup> However, the Latin is quite specific: ‘heavy clothing and arms’; ‘burdensome clothing and armour’; or ‘oppressive armour and weapons’ (*Vestituque graves ... armis*).<sup>161</sup> Given William’s detailed knowledge of the Byzantine military noted already, it is evident that Arduin is referring to the most heavily armed of the *κατάφρακτοι*, a unit sometimes referred to by historians as the *κλιβανοφόροι* (*klibanophoroi*). The disgruntled commander is contrasting these ‘oven bearers’ with their much less encumbered Norman counterparts. As recorded in Nikephoros Phokas’ military treatise of the 960s, various face, arm, chest and leg guards supplemented the iron helmets and corselets of this breed of *κατάφρακτοι*, and their horses were instructed to be ‘all-covered’ also (*ἵπποι κατάφράκτοι*).<sup>162</sup> Hence the hesitant Normans, Arduin implies, need not fear the imperial cavalry, for their lesser weight, and therefore greater mobility, gives them a considerable advantage. Furthermore, as the imperial cavalry are so heavily armoured, they are easy pickings when unhorsed. While ‘cumbersome clothing and unsuitable armour’ is hardly precise,

<sup>155</sup> GRW, I.212, 110.

<sup>156</sup> GRW, I.22–3, 100: “Quam facilem reditum, si vos velletis, haberem, / Nos aliquot vestra de gente iuvantibus”, inquit’ (“If I might return with the help of your people, we could easily uproot them”, he says).

<sup>157</sup> GRW, I.34, 100: ‘Quo duce de Graecis facilis victoria fiat’; compare with 24–5, 100: ‘Testabatur enim cito Graecos esse fugandos / Auxiliis horum, facili comitante labore.’

<sup>158</sup> DRGR, I.14, 15: ‘Normannos imbelles, viribus enerves, numero paucis’. ‘Effeminate’ is not a literal rendering, however, it conveys the sense of ‘viribus’ (‘strength/power’) ‘enerves’ (‘deprived of/made effeminate’). Wolf opted for ‘cowardly, weak and few in number’: *The deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard*, ed. and trans. K.B. Wolf (Ann Arbor, 2005), 61.

<sup>159</sup> Payen, ‘L’Image du Grec’, n. 33, 279: ‘Les Grecs ne sont-ils pas habillés comme des femmes? Leurs vêtements trop longs leur portent préjudice pendant les combats; c’est ce qu’affirme aux Normands d’Aversa le lombard Arduin’; Ewan Johnson, ‘Norman identity in southern Italian chronicles’, 90; Wolf, *Making history*, 129: ‘[in the GRW] The Greeks were effeminate, cowardly ... and they dressed funny.’

<sup>160</sup> Mathieu, in: GRW, 111; compare with Payen, ‘L’Image du Grec’, 279, n. 33: ‘Leurs vêtements trop longs leur portent préjudice pendant les combats’ (‘Their lengthy clothing disadvantages them in battle’); Johnson, ‘Norman identity in southern Italian chronicles’, 90: ‘[their] dress is unsuitable for battle’. Wolf rendered it as ‘dressed in a disagreeable fashion, and were inept in their use of arms’ (*Making history*, 129).

<sup>161</sup> The fact that *armum* denotes both armour and arms makes it difficult to translate the term into a language that distinguishes between the two.

<sup>162</sup> *Praecepta militaria*, in: McGeer, *Sowing the dragon’s teeth*, 12–59, III.1.4–10, 34–8.

it can only refer to the various layers of protection that shielded the mounts and bodies of the ‘extra heavy’ cavalrymen.<sup>163</sup>

Since Arduin was a Greek-speaking imperial *τοποτηρητής*, it is not unlikely that he was attired in Byzantine military dress when exhorting the Normans to join him.<sup>164</sup> Accordingly, the likelihood that he drew attention to his ‘effeminate’ apparel when canvassing for military support seems remote. As a military commander with ample experience of Byzantine cavalry panoply and tactics — after all, he had recently commanded the Lombardo-Norman cavalry contingent during the Byzantine campaign in Sicily (1038–40) — he would have emphasised tactical advantages, especially given the fact that the last battle with imperial forces at Canne 22 years earlier had been an unmitigated disaster. Moreover, the bulk of the evidence actually supports the idea that the Normans not only admired Byzantine military dress, but soon began to wear it themselves. Malaterra wrote of it favourably, referring to Joscelin as ‘wonderfully attired in the Greek style’.<sup>165</sup> By 1041 we can imagine considerable numbers of Norman soldiery using imperial arms and armour: Amatus recorded, and William indicated, that Byzantine corpses were stripped of such items in the wake of the victory near the River Ofanto.<sup>166</sup> But while the Normans undoubtedly adopted such panoply out of necessity rather than preference initially,<sup>167</sup> it is important to note that there are also some interesting Norman chess pieces of southern Italian provenance, that clearly feature *milites* wearing imperial armour and tunics.<sup>168</sup> The searing heat of the *Mezzogiorno* and its detrimental effect on Norman campaigning was noted by Malaterra.<sup>169</sup> As John France has observed, chain mail was simply not suited to this climate.<sup>170</sup> Hence, it is understandable that a Norman *miles* would choose to don the cooler corslets and tunics favoured by the Byzantines.

Given that interpretations of William’s identity and ethnicity derive entirely from his poem, it is not surprising that diverse opinions have been posited in this regard. If we are to conclude that the Norman viewpoint is most notably present in the works of Amatus and Malaterra — especially the latter given that he was almost certainly a member of that *gens* — then the *GRW* in comparison is very much a ‘Byzantine’ history. Of course, that is not to say that William was of Byzantine origin; he was clearly a resident of southern Italy writing for a Latin-reading audience. Yet not only does the poem regularly agree with the perspective of imperial writers, but it shares with them the view that the *imperium sanctum* is the sole inheritor to the ancient Roman empire, and hence outranks all other powers in Europe and the Mediterranean world. Such a perception did not pander to the expectations of William’s shadowy audience. Urban II, Roger Borsa or the Lombards of Salerno would not have expected, nor did they require, the poet to go to such lengths. Why then did he choose to do so? Although he will always remain an enigma, it seems most likely that William’s Lombardo-Byzantine background determined this approach either wittingly, unwittingly, or both. The allure of Byzantium remained visible well into the twelfth century: after all, the coastal cities of Apulia did not hesitate to support the Byzantines against their Norman rulers in 1155. Of course, the ‘grass is always greener’, yet it seems reasonable to assume that Lombard identity still retained vestiges of its Byzantine past some 50 years after William finished the *GRW*. Although direct imperial influence in southern Italy finally came to an end with the fall of Bari in 1071, evidently a form of cultural imperialism continued, the attractiveness of which, if the famous mosaic of Roger II in the Martorana is considered, had not lost its lustre by the middle of the twelfth century. Such things considered, the *GRW* provides us with one of the most important windows into cultural and ethnic identity in eleventh- and twelfth-century southern Italy.

<sup>163</sup> For good discussions of imperial arms and armour based on literary and artistic evidence, see McGeer, *Sowing the dragon’s teeth*, 214–17; Maria Parani, *Reconstructing the reality of images: Byzantine material culture and religious iconography, 11th–15th centuries* (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2003), 101–29.

<sup>164</sup> *DRGR*, I.8, 11: ‘Harduinum ... Graeci sermonis peritiam habebat.’

<sup>165</sup> *DRGR*, II.43, 51: ‘mirifice Graeco more praeparatum’.

<sup>166</sup> *Amatus*, II.23, 86; compare with *GRW*, I.314, 116: ‘spoliis collectis gentis Achaeae’.

<sup>167</sup> *GRW*, I.259, 112: ‘Obtectos clipeis paucos lorica tuetur.’ Here William observed that, prior to the previous battle near the River Olivento, only a few Normans possessed shields and hauberks.

<sup>168</sup> For photographs of the chess pieces in question, see Angus McBride and David Nicolle, *The Normans* (Oxford, 1987), 48–9.

<sup>169</sup> *DRGR*, II.33, 45.

<sup>170</sup> John France, *Western warfare in the age of the Crusades, 1000–1300* (London, 1999), 21.

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